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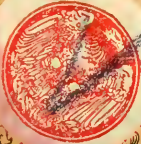
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SUSAN'S FINISH

Price, 15 Cents



WALTER H. BAKER & CO.
BOSTON



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Susan's Finish

A Comedy in One Act

By

ALICE C. THOMPSON

*Author of "Just Like Percy," "Romantic Mary,"
"Oysters," "An Auction at Meadowvale,"
"The Truth About Jane," etc.*

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Susan's Finish

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CHARACTERS

EMILY CLARKE.

STELLA CLARKE, *her sister.*

MARY JAMES

MAUD SINCLAIR

VIOLET LOVE

ROSE CLARKE, *the country cousin.*

SUSAN, *the maid.*

} *their friends.*

TIME :—The present, an afternoon in early summer.

PROPERTIES

Six cups and saucers, bread and butter on plate, a photograph, a pie, teapot and cream pitcher, an old patchwork quilt tied up in brown paper, a pencil and paper, a basket.



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Susan's Finish

SCENE.—*Sitting-room in the home of EMILY CLARKE and STELLA CLARKE. At R. C. an armchair and small tea-table with six cups and saucers ; at L. C. a sofa and three chairs. Entrances at C. and down L. Window at R. C.*

(The curtain rises to discover STELLA, who arranges cups and saucers on table at R. C.)

Enter EMILY at L.

EMILY. There! I knew it would happen sooner or later. But why should she choose to-day of all days?

(Comes down C.)

STELLA. What's the matter?

EMILY. Susan is going back to the country.

STELLA. Back to the ancestral home. *(Laughs.)* Why, she's said that for years.

EMILY. Yes, but now she's looking up her train. She says she's homesick for a sight of green fields. I went into the kitchen to ask her to make a hot gingerbread cake and she just turned up her nose and said she was going back to where hot gingerbread wasn't expected of her in the middle of the afternoon.

STELLA. Just an excuse. Wait until we see her go. Don't worry.

EMILY. That's all very well, Stella. You always take things easily; I can't. And the girls coming in to tea to arrange about the club——

STELLA. Yes, I know. There's Violet now.

Enter VIOLET LOVE at C., wearing hat.

VIOLET. How do you do, Emily? Hello, Stella; I see I'm the first.

EMILY. Yes, you're on time, Violet. Is Maud coming?

VIOLET. Yes, and Mary. I met them down-town this morning. (*Sits down, EMILY near her.*)

SUSAN (*outside, L., calling loudly*). Miss Stella!

STELLA. Bother Susan! She's been with us fifteen years, and every May she gets an attack of country fever. It's nothing but tantrums, really. I'll *settle* her. [*Exit at L.*]

VIOLET. Do you know, I don't blame Susan. She came from your grandfather's place, didn't she?

EMILY. Yes, she lived with my grandfather for years.

VIOLET. On that lovely old farm at Willowdale. I've heard Susan tell all about it. They have about fifty rooms, haven't they?

EMILY. Oh, yes, it's an immense place; the finest in the country, I believe. Ah, here are Maud and Mary.

(*Rises as MAUD SINCLAIR and MARY JAMES enter at C., wearing pretty summer costumes and hats.*)

MARY. Better late than never. Hello, Violet.

MAUD. Violet on time! Wonderful! And where's Stella?

EMILY. She'll be here in a minute. (*Voices are heard without, at L. EMILY glances uneasily at door and speaks in a loud whisper.*) She's having her annual talk with Susan.

(*All sit.*)

MARY. Oh, yes, I know. And is she really going back to the farm?

EMILY. She says so. Our humble city flat grows irksome, and Susan's thoughts are straying to the big rooms and the green fields of Willowdale, not to mention the cream, chickens and ripe strawberries.

MAUD. It must be a lovely place. But you have never seen it, have you, Emily?

EMILY. Never, though I've had invitations from my Cousin Rose to visit.

MARY. Your Cousin Rose. She's just about eighteen, isn't she, and has never been to the city?

EMILY. I don't even know her.

(*STELLA and SUSAN enter together at L., both talking at once. SUSAN has gray hair, stoops slightly and wears spectacles. She carries bread and butter on a plate.*)

STELLA (*eagerly*). Yes, Susan, I'll plant a whole cupful of scarlet runner beans in the kitchen window-box, and you can raise mint and parsley and onions on the roof. Onions, Susan! Then you'll imagine you're back at Willowdale.

SUSAN (*scornfully*). Onions on the roof! And beans in a box! Me, that's seen whole acres of garden stuff and rose bushes as high as a chestnut tree.

STELLA. Whew!

SUSAN. A'most as high as a tree, anyways.

(*Puts plate on table.*)

MAUD. Good-afternoon, Susan.

SUSAN. Good-day to you, young ladies.

MARY (*sympathetically*). I can feel for you, Susan, indeed I can. To any one who has lived in the country —

SUSAN. Yes, miss, it's pretty hard to come down to a little city flat.

STELLA (*airily*). Up, Susan, up. We're on the top floor.

SUSAN. Yes, miss, seven stories away from the ground. Oh, when I think of Willowdale, my heart is fit to bust. The flowers we had, and the vines trailin' over the big piazzy where I used to sit, takin' me ease.

VIOLET. But don't people work hard on a farm? And a farmhouse with fifty rooms, too.

SUSAN. Did I say fifty rooms? Well, a'most fifty. But with five hired girls and the men-folk, we got along.

MARY. Five girls, and fifty rooms! What a grand farm.

SUSAN. You may well say so, miss. And the grand bedroom I had. I can just see it now, with an elegant view out of the winder of the lake with real swans floating about on top. And me lace curtains, and the *beautiful* quilt on me bed, all embroidered with pink silk and bows of sating ribbon.

MAUD. It sounds like a baby's carriage rug.

SUSAN. Oh, them was the good old days!

(*Goes to L., wiping eyes on apron.*)

EMILY. Will you make the tea for us—before you go?

STELLA (*with mock pathos*). Just *once more*, Susan.

SUSAN. I'll see if I have time. (*Grimly.*) I've got me trunk packed. I'm going back to Willowdale. [*Exit.*]

EMILY. Now, what do you think of it, Stella?

STELLA. I don't know. Perhaps she wants to be coaxed to stay.

EMILY. Coaxed! Didn't you bribe her with flowers in the kitchen and onions on the roof——

MAUD. One would think the onions, at least, would have brought tears to her eyes.

(MARY goes to window.)

STELLA. I can't think yet that she means it. We couldn't get along without Susan.

EMILY. Indeed, we couldn't. Willowdale has cast a glamour over her. It must be very beautiful, of course, but I wish something would happen that would put it out of her mind forever.

MARY. There's a funny old farmer's wagon down in the street, and a girl in a sunbonnet. They're stopping——

MAUD. Wouldn't you love to see Susan's pink embroidered quilt?

VIOLET. Oh, wouldn't I?

EMILY. Well, we haven't discussed our club yet.

MARY. The girl in the sunbonnet is coming into this apartment house.

STELLA. Probably selling eggs and butter. Come and give us your ideas, Mary.

(Takes her hand and they go to C., where all sit down in a semicircle; EMILY with pencil and paper in her hand.)

EMILY. First, what shall we call our club?

MAUD. The Fluffy Ruffles.

EMILY. No, that's too frivolous. You know we meet for study.

MAUD. Nature study—birds, bugs, beans, and bees.

VIOLET. How would the Earnest Endeavor club do?

STELLA. No, that's much too serious. Remember we also meet for amusement, probably picnics.

MARY. Let's put it to the vote.

MAUD. How do you vote?

EMILY. I'll tell you. Oh, here's Susan.

Enter SUSAN at L., carrying a teapot.

MAUD. Oh, bother Susan!

SUSAN. I've made the tea extra good, Miss Emily, for it's terrible to think it's the last time I'll make tea for you.

(Puts teapot on table and sniffles.)

STELLA. It is terrible. Oh, Susan, how have you the heart to leave us? And you didn't even make us a cake.

EMILY. The cream, Susan; you've forgotten the cream.

SUSAN. I'll get it, miss—before I go. *[Exit at L.]*

EMILY. Now I hope we'll have no more interruptions for a while. *(A knock at c.)*

MAUD. That must be Susan's cab.

(EMILY rises and opens door to ROSE CLARKE.)

MARY. The butter and egg girl!

ROSE. Does Miss Emily Clarke live here?

EMILY. I am Emily Clarke.

ROSE *(rapturously)*. Cousin!

(Throws her arms around EMILY'S neck and kisses her.)

EMILY *(retreating)*. Cousin! Why, who are you?

ROSE. I am Rose Clarke, from Willowdale. May I come in?

EMILY. Cousin Rose! Oh, do come in. How ever did you find us? I—I am delighted to meet you.

(ROSE enters. She wears a simple gingham dress and a sunbonnet; carries a brown paper bundle in one arm and a country basket in other hand.)

ROSE. Where is Stella? *(STELLA rises. ROSE drops her bundle and basket and embraces her, the other girls staring.)* Dear Cousin Stella! How often I've longed to meet you both! *(Picks up bundle and basket.)* And so this morning when Dan said he was coming to the city with a load of potatoes, I begged father to let me come along, and here I am.

(Pushes sunbonnet back.)

STELLA. It's such a surprise—such a nice surprise. These are our friends. Please let me introduce you informally, girls. This is Violet Love, Mary James and Maud Sinclair.

(The girls rise.)

ROSE. How are you? Pleased to meet you.

VIOLET. How do you like the city?

ROSE. Oh, it's wonderful! I've seen such strange sights.

And I've been shopping. I *love* to shop. I've got a new best dress; it's white nun's veiling embroidered with pink and trimmed with bows of satin ribbon.

MAUD. Just like Susan's bed quilt!

EMILY (*hastily*). Let me take your basket.

ROSE. Oh, wait a minute! There's something in it for you. (*Takes out a pie and presents it with great satisfaction.*) There, I made it myself.

EMILY. How good of you, Cousin Rose! Thank you so much. (*Puts pie on table and offers chair to ROSE.*) Won't you sit down?

(ROSE sits with basket and bundle on lap; all the others sit around.)

MAUD. Now do tell us all about your *lovely* country home.

VIOLET. Oh, yes, please. We do like to hear about the beautiful old colonial house with its fifty rooms, its big piazzas —

ROSE (*with a little gasp*). Fifty rooms!

STELLA. "A'most fifty," don't you remember?

VIOLET. And all the horses and cows and sheep and turkeys and —

ROSE. Oh, you've made a mistake, I'm sure.

VIOLET. Oh, *don't* tell me you haven't got swans on the lake any longer!

ROSE. Swans on the lake! Turkeys and sheep! Why, where did you get your ideas of Willowdale? It sounds like the picture on a birthday card.

MARY. What, no swans?

ROSE. I never saw a swan in my life.

MAUD. And you haven't twenty-five horses?

ROSE. Twenty-five horses! My goodness, do you think we run a horse fair?

EMILY. How disappointing! We were led to believe it an ideal place.

STELLA. But life on a farm must be beautiful.

ROSE. It's a hard-working life. Just look at *my* hands, and yours are so soft and white.

VIOLET (*shocked*). But *you* don't do farm work?

ROSE. Oh, yes. I'm up at five in summer every morning.

MAUD. What for?

ROSE. To get things done.

EMILY. What on earth do you do, Rose?

ROSE. Everything. Bake bread, sweep, feed the chickens, sometimes milk the cow.

STELLA (*shrilly*). The cow? What cow?

ROSE (*with dignity*). Our cow. She's called Betsy.

STELLA. Betsy! Oh, my!

EMILY. But you've got a hundred cows, haven't you?

ROSE (*laughing*). A hundred cows? Why, do you think we keep a dairy?

STELLA. Do give us some tea, Emily.

(EMILY rises and goes to table and pours tea. MARY passes bread. ROSE puts basket and bundle on floor.)

ROSE (*taking bread*). Oh, thank you. It is so kind of you to ask me to supper.

MARY. Oh, this is only afternoon tea.

ROSE. We might have the pie.

(*The girls look at one another.*)

STELLA (*gaily*). Yes, certainly we'll have the pie. I'll cut it. (*Goes to table.*) This is quite original.

MAUD. Pie for afternoon tea? I should say so!

ROSE. Traveling makes you hungry.

MARY. Traveling—oh, I see. How far is it to Willowdale?

ROSE (*impressively*). Sixteen miles.

EMILY. There's no cream. Susan has forgotten it.

STELLA. I'll call her. (*Goes to L.*) Susan!

ROSE. Oh, is that the same Susan who used to live at Willowdale when our fathers were boys?

STELLA. It is the same Susan. (*Calls.*)

ROSE. I'm so anxious to see her. Father often speaks of her. She was a wonder; she did the work of ten women.

EMILY. Susan did! Then what did the five other hired girls do?

ROSE. Five hired girls? What fairy stories! There was never any one but Susan.

Enter SUSAN at L., carrying a little cream pitcher. She wears an old bonnet.

SUSAN. Here's the cream, miss, or what they call cream here. At Willowdale we got better milk from our Jerseys.

(ROSE rises.)

ROSE. Susan! (*Goes to her.*) How do you do, Susan? I've heard so much about you. I'm Rose Clarke.

SUSAN. Not Mr. Tom's daughter!

ROSE. Yes.

SUSAN. Oh, but I'm glad to see you, miss.

(ROSE takes her hands.)

ROSE. I just feel as if I'd always known you, Susan. And I've wanted so much to meet you, to thank you. I know all you've done for father and grandfather too. (*Vigorously.*) You worked like a *slave*.

SUSAN (*indignantly*). Me, a slave!

ROSE. I mean you worked *so hard*. Oh, Susan, have you forgotten the old place?

SUSAN. Not me, miss.

EMILY. She's going back.

ROSE. Going back? When?

STELLA (*promptly*). To-day.

ROSE. Then you can come with me.

EMILY. On the wagon, Susan.

ROSE. Oh, I'm afraid the farm will seem a very humble place after these grand city apartments.

SUSAN (*trying to escape*). I'll—get my bag, miss.

ROSE (*holding her*). Oh, Susan, do you remember the old cellar steps you fell down once? Well, we've had new steps put in.

SUSAN. It was about time. Them was the rickettyest, mouldiest old stairs that ever tripped a decent woman up. (*Suddenly recollecting.*) I'm—I'm in a hurry, please.

EMILY. There's lots of time. You're going to ride in a wagon all the way.

ROSE. And do you remember the little attic where you used to sleep? And the wicked little bed that used to fall to pieces every other night? (*Laughs gaily.*) Poor Susan! how you must have come down—*thump!*

STELLA. With the pink and white embroidered quilt on top.

SUSAN (*very uncomfortable*). Let me go, miss, let me go.

ROSE. Susan, I've brought you a present. (*Drops her hands.* SUSAN rushes out at L.) What's the matter? What have I done? Have I made a mistake?

EMILY. No, Rose, but we've found Susan out.

STELLA (*taking ROSE'S hand*). Oh, I'm glad, I'm so glad you came, Cousin Rose. (*Laughs.*)

(ROSE *drops into a chair.*)

ROSE. There's a photograph in that basket for you, Emily.

(EMILY *gets photo.*)

EMILY. What is it?

ROSE. Can't you guess?

EMILY. It's a barn.

(MAUD *looks over her shoulder.*)

MAUD. No, it's a wood-shed.

ROSE. You're both wrong. It's the farmhouse.

(*The photo is passed round.*)

STELLA. Willowdale Farm. Never!

EMILY. I suppose—you're very fond of it, Rose.

ROSE. I am. It's a simple, plain old farmhouse, but it's home to me. Oh, I wish you could see our flower garden and the orchard and the little creek. Won't you all come out and spend the day?

VIOLET. I'll be delighted.

MARY. And so shall I.

MAUD. We'll all come together—the nature study club; and Rose will help us. (ROSE *rises.*)

ROSE. I must go now. Dan is waiting. Will you ask Susan if she is ready? (ROSE *picks up her basket and ties on sunbonnet.*) Oh, I am afraid I'll never be anything but a country girl.

EMILY. We like you best that way.

Enter SUSAN without bonnet.

STELLA. Aren't you ready, Susan?

SUSAN. Oh, miss—I think it would be better for me to go by train. I'm not so young as I used to be and the wagon—I could get a train later, I guess.

ROSE. Oh, yes. There's one at four-thirty, and another at five, and one at five-thirty. Which one shall I expect you on?

SUSAN. I'm—I'm not quite ready.

EMILY. Do you know this picture, Susan?

(Shows photo ; ROSE unties bundle.)

SUSAN (*eagerly*). It's the farm, the dear little old place!
As natural as life!

ROSE. And here's a little present for you.

(Gives her a patchwork quilt.)

SUSAN. My old patchwork quilt. The same that covered me many a weary night. (*Hugs it to her.*)

MAUD. It's warmer than pink satin and lace, isn't it, Susan?

SUSAN. Oh, but I'm a foolish, wicked old woman that's been spinning yarns to make you think how grand I've been. I guess I won't go back.

ROSE. You won't go back?

SUSAN. I'll think it over.

EMILY. Yes, think it over for another year, Susan. We'd miss you.

SUSAN. I'll go and make you a hot gingerbread loaf for supper.

[Exit at L. with quilt over arm.]

ROSE. Then good-bye. I'll see you all soon at Willowdale.

STELLA. Good-bye, Rose.

EMILY. Good-bye.

[Exit ROSE.]

VIOLET.)

MAUD.) Good-bye, Rose.

MARY.)

(The three girls run to the window ; EMILY and STELLA at C.)

STELLA. Our country cousin's visit has had some effect.

EMILY. But what a disenchantment! One cow called Betsy—

STELLA. The swans, sheep and turkeys conspicuous by their absence.

EMILY. Oh, Susan, Susan!

(The girls at the window wave their hands.)

VIOLET. She's looking up.

MAUD. Good-bye, Rose—little country Rose.

Enter SUSAN stealthily at L.

SUSAN. Has she gone?

EMILY. Yes, Susan.

SUSAN. Wagon and all?

(The girls turn from the window.)

MARY. She's out of sight, Susan.

SUSAN *(at c., with hands upraised)*. Then praise be!
Give me me onions on the roof and a box of parsley in the
kitchen, and I'll never bother ye's again.

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